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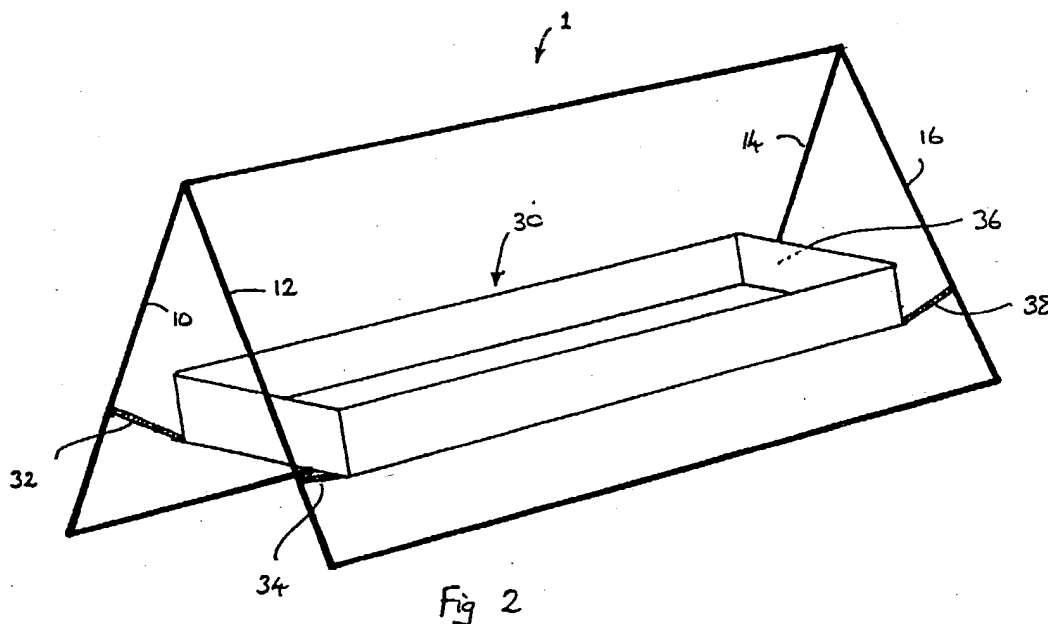
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(58) Field of search
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(54) Hammock for cats or dogs

(57) A hammock for cats or dogs comprises a support frame having a pair of angled uprights (10, 12, and 14, 16) at each end between which is slung, in hammock-like fashion, a soft cradle (30). A cover may be provided to go over the frame so that, when the cradle (30) is removed from the frame and placed on the floor of the cover, the device may be used as a carrier or alternatively as a cat or dog 'playhouse'.



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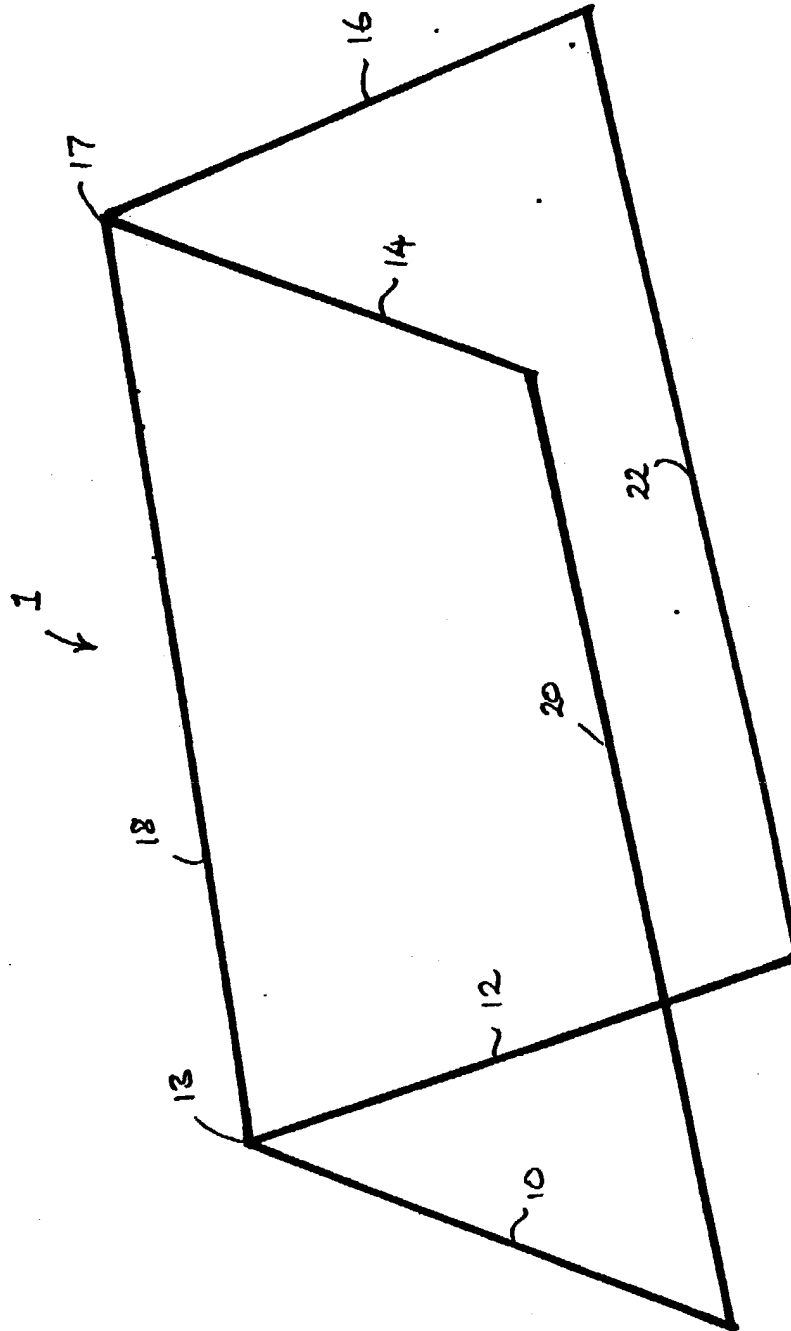


Fig 1

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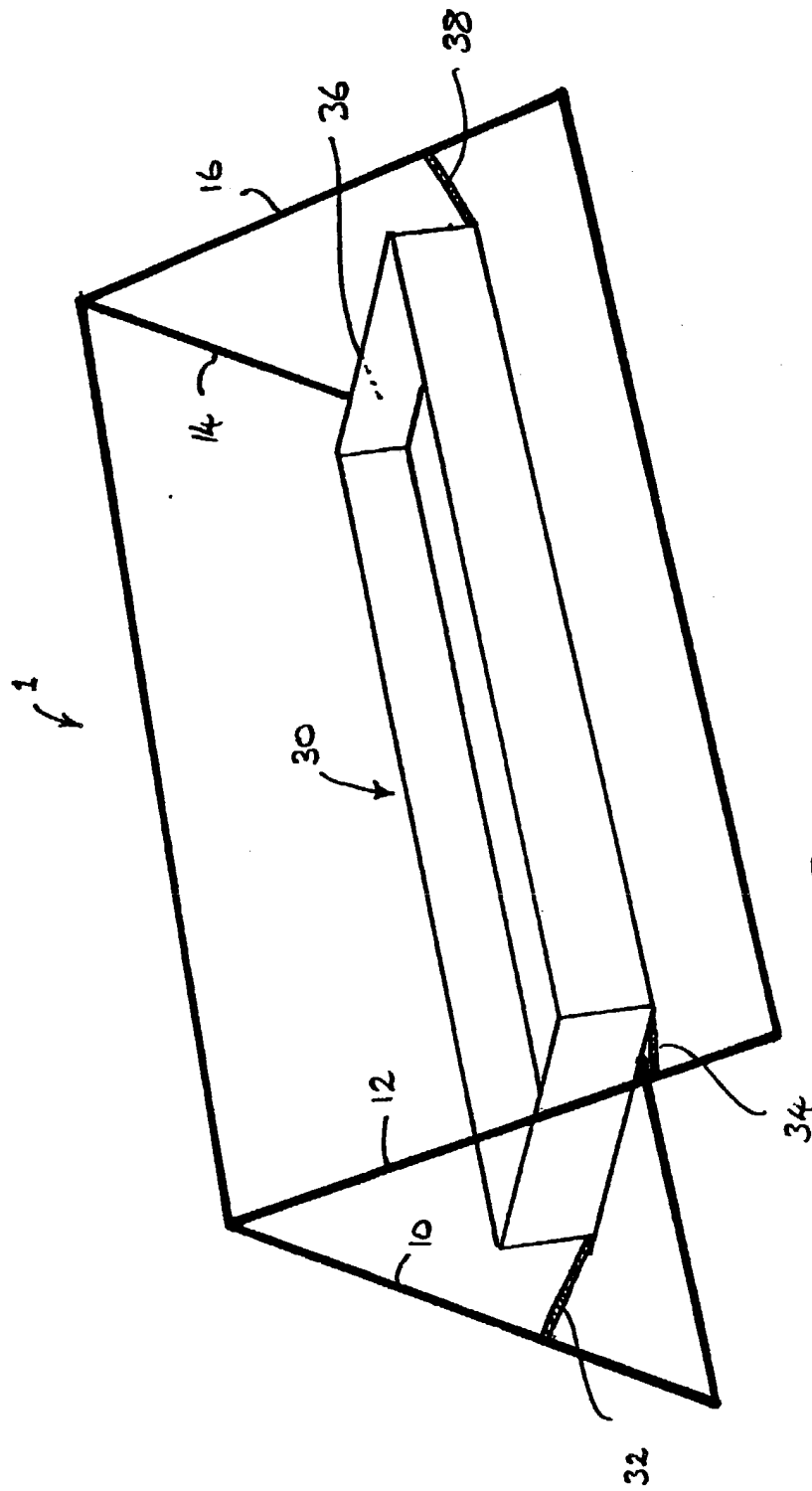


Fig 2

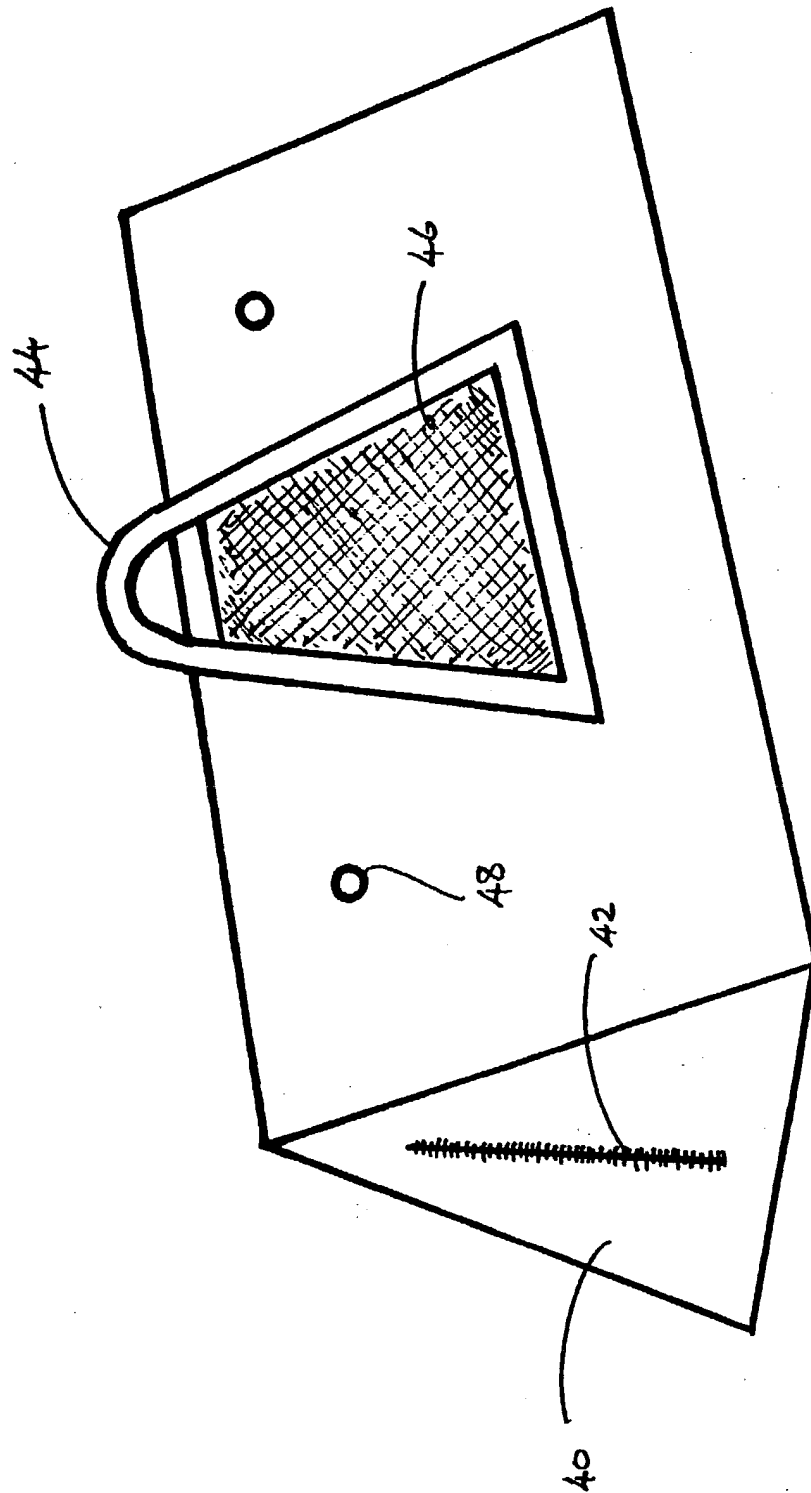
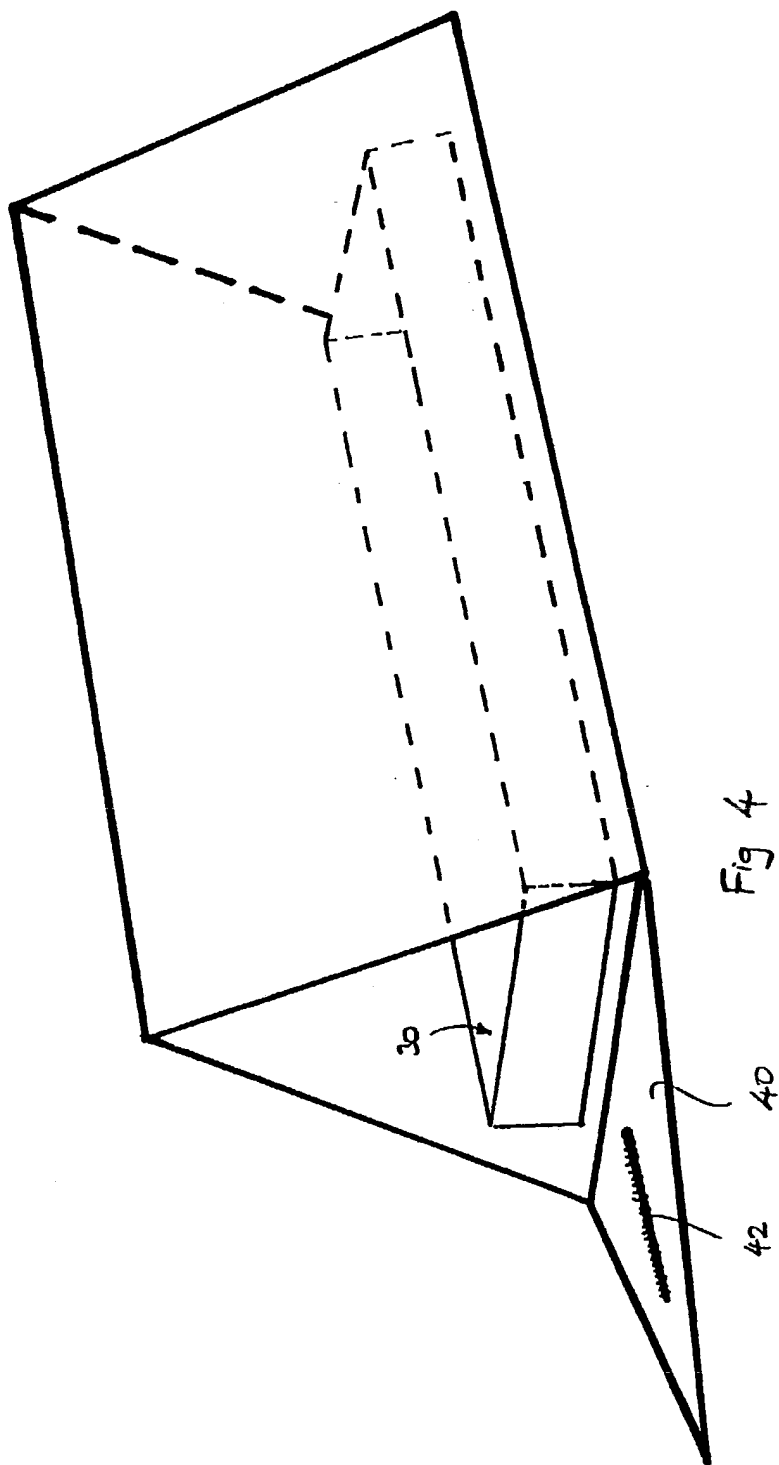


Fig 3



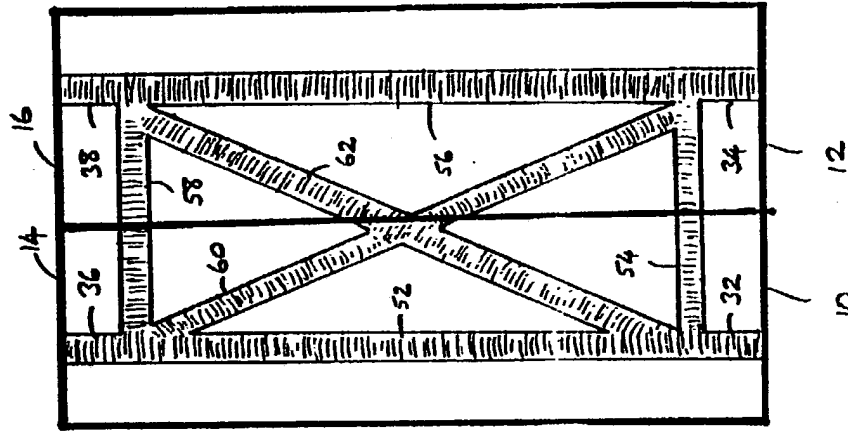


Fig 6

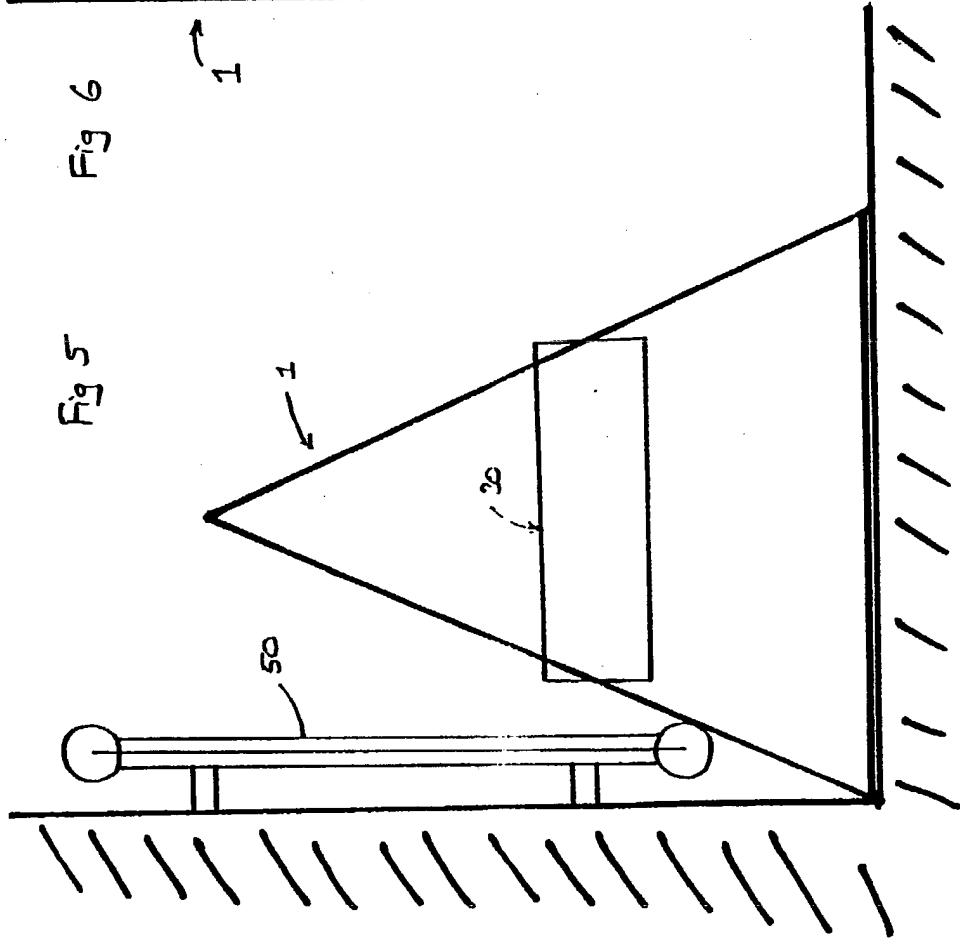


Fig 5

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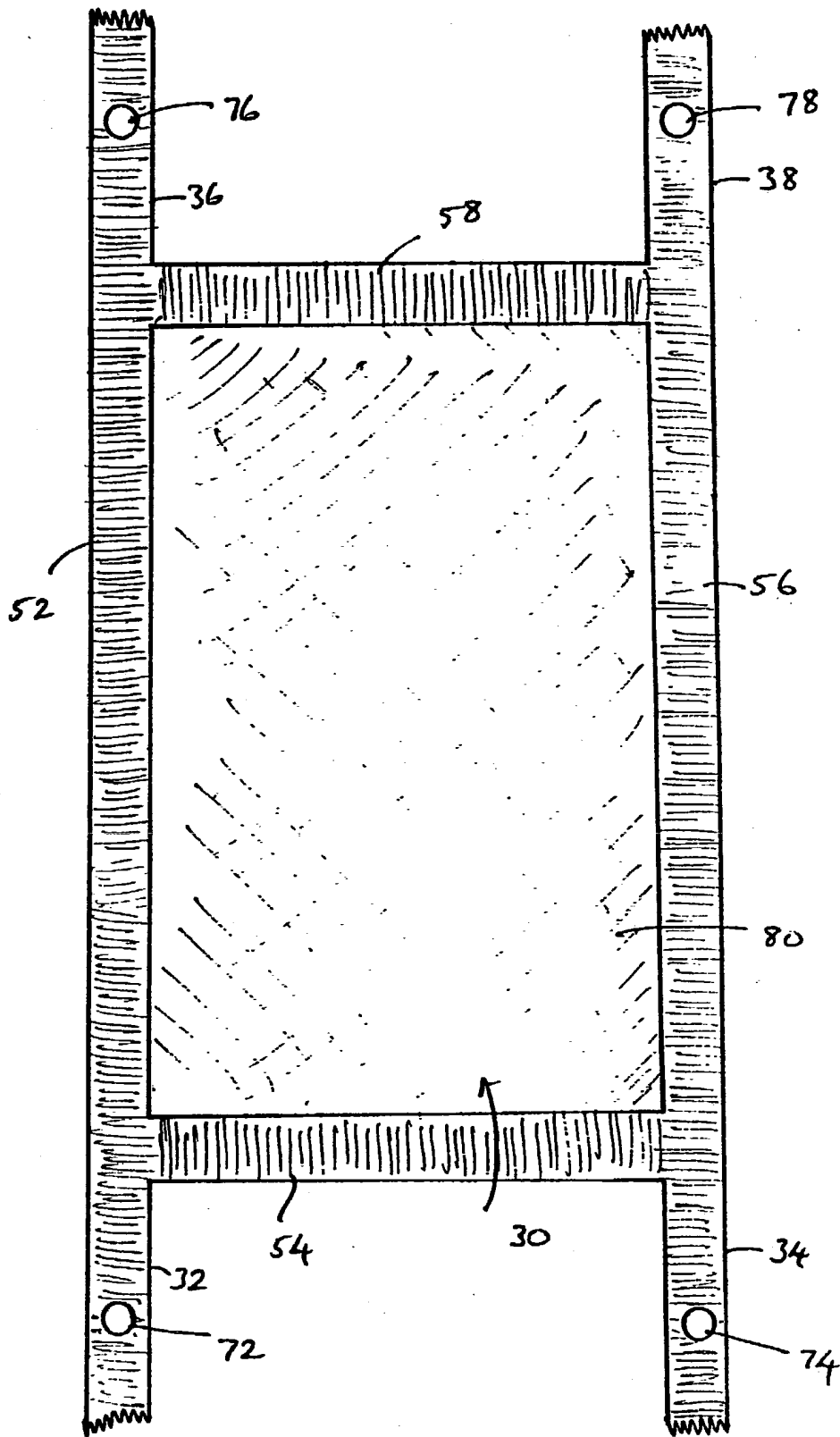


Fig 7

HAMMOCK FOR CATS OR DOGS

5 The present invention relates to a hammock for cats or dogs and particularly, though not exclusively, to a combined hammock, carrier and playhouse.

Cats in particular tend to seek out areas of warmth in which to curl up and sleep. This often
10 causes inconvenience to their owners in that the cat may sleep on furniture, bedding, radiators or other desirable spots leaving their hair, parasites and dirty paw marks in these areas. They will often sleep in places heated by the central heating system in winter,
15 and will seek out areas of sunlight in the summer. Cats tend to prefer warm areas and choose to sleep in soft, comfortable surroundings.

Finally, they are particularly playful animals and will often use boxes as a 'playhouse' and a secure base
20 in which to hide and to sleep.

It is an object of the present invention to fulfill at least some of these needs. It is a particular object of a subsidiary aspect of the invention to provide a hammock with features enabling
25 it to double up as a playhouse.

Previously, sleeping quarters for cats and dogs have tended to be provided by placing bedding directly on the ground. This tends firstly to result in draughts, and secondly to result in the animal perhaps
30 not being as comfortable as it might be if it can feel the hard ground through the bedding. It is another object of the present invention at least to alleviate these difficulties.

Pet dogs and cats require, finally, a safe and

comfortable medium in which they can be transported, for example to the vet or on family holidays. Traditional carrying baskets or cages have a number of
5 disadvantages associated with them: they are not particularly comfortable, and since they are generally not used very frequently they are strange and unfamiliar to the animal which of course increases tension during the journey. Furthermore, if a cat or
10 dog only sees the carrying basket when it is to be taken to the vet the mere sight of the basket can itself awaken bad memories and further increase tension in the animal to be transported.

It is a further object of the present invention,
15 at least in a subsidiary aspect, to alleviate some of these difficulties. In the particular aspect in question, the hammock of the present invention doubles up as a carrier. This means that when the animal is to be transported, it is in a container with which it is
20 familiar and which the animal associates with comfort.

According to the present invention there is provided a hammock for cats or dogs comprising a support frame and a cradle suspended from the frame by releasable securing means, the securing means holding
25 the cradle above ground level. The support frame could be of any suitably rigid material, such as steel, aluminium, a plastics material, wood, or so on. When in use it should of course be sufficiently rigid to support the cradle, but it may be convenient for the
30 frame to be designed for collapsibility or disassembly and flat packing.

There may be four releasable securing means provided which are arranged to secure the cradle to the frame at four respective uprights, one pair of uprights

being at one end of the cradle, the other pair at the other. These uprights could either be vertical, or could be inclined to the vertical.

5 The uprights in each respective pair may be joined at their upper ends in an inverted U or V-shaped arrangement. Alternatively, the uprights could be generally vertical, in which case they could be joined at their upper ends by horizontal cross straps. Also
10 it would be possible, though perhaps not very convenient, to use two planar end pieces, each instead of one of the pairs of uprights. With this arrangement, the cradle could be attached to the end pieces either at its corners or along the two opposing
15 end edges.

 The upper portions of the two U or V-shaped arrangements may be joined by an upper crossbar suitable for use as a carrying handle. This enables the owner of the hammock to lift it conveniently with
20 one hand, either with or without an animal in the cradle.

 The lower ends of the uprights in one pair may be joined to the respective lower ends of the upright in the upper pair by a respective pair of lower crossbars,
25 acting as a base for the hammock. This increases stability. Alternatively, a fixed, flat base could be provided. The lower ends of the uprights in each respective pair could also be joined together, if desired, by additional lower crossbars.

30 The releasable securing means may include or comprise elastic webbing. This expression includes any type of elasticated material suitable for use in supporting the cradle, whether flat or otherwise. The webbing may be attached to the cradle at its four

corners, if the cradle is rectangular, and in such a case it may conveniently extend underneath the cradle to provide additional support.

- 5 The webbing may, but need not, be releasably secured to the cradle. If the webbing is so releasably secured, the cradle can easily be removed, for example for washing, without disturbing the supporting webbing. This may conveniently extend between the four uprights, 10 either only around the corners of the rectangle, or alternatively across the diagonals as well. The cradle can be secured to the webbing by means of straps attached by, for example, velcro. Where the webbing is permanently secured to the cradle, the cradle and 15 webbing can together be removed from the frame.

A cover, preferably of a flexible plastics material, shaped to fit over the frame may be provided which is capable, when so positioned, of retaining a cat or dog therein. Conveniently, the cover is of a 20 size and shape to retain the cat or dog therein when it is in the cradle, the cradle having been released from the frame and placed on a floor of the cover. In this position, the frame, cradle and cover together act as a playhouse.

- 25 The cover may include a carrying handle, so that it can be used for transporting the animal where necessary.

30 The cover may have an opening at one end through which the frame may be passed into the cover, the opening having a closable flap, preferably a zipped flap. When the flap is open, the animal has entry into the playhouse. The cover may include one or more zipped slits therein, desirably in the closable flap, which may act to stimulate the animal's curiosity when

the device is being used as a playhouse.

Finally, the cover may include one or more apertures therein allowing the owner of a cat or dog inside the cover to manipulate toys inside the cover. These apertures are preferably small eyelets located towards the upper part of the cover, through which string may be passed.

The invention may be carried into practice in a number of ways and one specific embodiment will now be described by way of example, with reference to the drawing accompanying schematic drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows the basic shape of the support frame;

Figure 2 shows the frame with the cradle in position;

Figure 3 shows the cover over the frame;

Figure 4 shows the device in 'playhouse' mode, with the cradle removed from the frame, and placed on the floor of the cover;

Figure 5 is an end view of the cradle and frame, showing how they may be positioned next to a household central heating radiator;

Figure 6 is a top view of the frame, with the cradle removed, showing an exemplary type of elastic or webbing suspension; and

Figure 7 shows the underside of the cradle with an alternative integral suspension system.

The basic shape of the support frame 1 is illustrated schematically in Figure 1. The frame comprises first and second pairs of angled uprights 10, 12 and 14, 16 with the respective uprights of each pair being connected together at apexes 13 and 17. The apexes are connected together by an upper horizontal

crossbar 18, and the lower ends of the uprights 10, 14 and 12; 16 are respectively joined by lower crossbars 20, 22. In use, the upper crossbar 18 acts as a carrying handle, and the lower crossbars 20, 22 rest on the ground and act as a base.

The frame is desirably manufactured of a tubular metal, for example steel, aluminium or aluminium alloy. It could, however, instead be made of a plastics material or of wood. In a practical embodiment, the uprights 11, 12 and 14, 16 would probably be slightly curved at their upper ends so that they meet generally horizontally at the apexes 13, 17. Also, the angles between the uprights and the lower crossbars 20, 22 may be rounded. The frame is desirably rigid, although it may be designed for collapsibility or disassembly and flat packing.

Figure 2 shows the frame 1 with a cradle 30 in position. The cradle is shaped as a rectangular shallow-sided tray, and is suspended from the frame 1 by elastic straps 32, 34, 36, 38 which extend between the four corners of the frame and the respective uprights 10, 12, 14, 16. The cradle is thus supported above ground level. Desirably, the cradle itself is of a soft, preferably fleecy material, with a flexible base for comfort. When a dog or cat is located within the cradle, the base of the cradle is arranged to deform to an extent whereby it will conform to the animal's body contours, while at the same time having sufficient rigidity to support the animal and to keep it suspended above the ground. A suitable material would be foam backing material.

The uprights 10, 12, 14, 16 may be provided with suitable means (not shown) whereby the elastic straps

32, 34, 36, 38 may be attached, or alternatively the straps may be provided with suitable clips which will enable them to be secured at any desired location along the uprights.

Figure 3 illustrates a cover which is suitable for positioning over the frame 1. It includes, at one end, a triangular flap 40 with a zip (not shown) around the two upper edges of the triangle to enable the flap to be lowered as is shown in Figure 4, thereby enabling the cover to be slid over the frame. Positioned vertically in the flap 40 is a zipped slit 42, which enables an animal to be placed into the container with ease. The slit also has the advantage that when the covered frame shown in Figure 3 is placed on the floor it is suitable for use as a playhouse, especially for cats, with the slit 42 acting as an invitation for the cat to explore. The cover is preferably of a flexible plastics or PVC material, although it could alternatively be of cloth.

Instead of zips, other means could be used to close the flap 40 and the slit 42.

The cover is also provided with a carrying handle 44. Adequate ventilation is achieved by means of a mesh portion 46 (desirably on both of the two sloping faces of the cover) containing gauze, muslin or the like.

Finally, small apertures in the form of eyelets 48 are provided through which string can be threaded. This enables the owner of an animal within the cover to manipulate toys inside the cover, so keeping the animal occupied.

Figure 4 shows how, when the device is to be used in playhouse or carrying mode, the cradle 30 can be

removed from the frame 1 and placed on the floor of the cover, to give the animal more room inside. The frame, of course, is desirably retained in the cover to give
 5 the cover some rigidity.

Figure 5 is a side view of the frame 1 with the suspended cradle 30 positioned next to and partly beneath a household central heating radiator. In this position, the cradle 30 is positioned close to the
 10 radiator so that the animal can take advantage of the warmth. The triangular shape of the frame, fitting partly beneath the radiator, allows the distance between the cradle 30 and the radiator 50 to be small while at the same time ensuring that the device is
 15 absolutely stable against tipping over.

Figure 6 is a top view of the frame 1 with the cradle removed showing one particular arrangement for suspending the cradle. As can be seen, the straps 32, 34, 36, 38 are connected together by intermediate
 20 straps 52, 54, 56, 58 in a rectangular configuration, and cross straps 60, 62. The cradle itself may either be fixedly secured to the upper side of this support arrangement or alternatively some means (not shown) may be provided whereby the cradle can be removably secured
 25 to the straps. In one particular embodiment (not shown) the base of the cradle is provided with retaining straps which pass around the straps 52, 56 and which are secured together at the underside of the suspension arrangement by means of velcro.

30 Finally, Figure 7 is a view of the underside of the cradle 30 with an alternative arrangement of elastic straps. In this arrangement, the cross straps 60, 62 are omitted, and the suspension in the central area is provided instead by an elasticated base,

preferably a meshed base, comprising part of, or which is attached to, the cradle 30.

5 Figure 7 also illustrates one method by which the straps 32, 34, 36, 38 may be attached to the uprights 10, 12, 14, 16: eyelets 72, 74, 76, 78 are provided which are arranged to be received over suitable respective spigots (not shown) on the uprights.

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CLAIMS

5 1. A hammock for cats or dogs comprising a support frame and a cradle suspended from the frame by releasable securing means, the securing means holding the cradle above ground level.

10 2. A hammock as claimed in Claim 1 in which there are four releasable securing means arranged to secure the cradle to the frame at four respective uprights, one pair of uprights being at one end of the cradle, the other pair at the other.

15 3. A hammock as claimed in Claim 2 in which the uprights in each respective pair are joined at their upper ends in an inverted U or V-shaped arrangement.

20 4. A hammock as claimed in Claim 3 in which the upper portions of the two U or V-shaped arrangements are joined by an upper crossbar suitable for use as a carrying handle.

25 5. A hammock as claimed in any one of Claims 2 to 4 in which the lower ends of the uprights in one pair are joined to the respective lower ends of the uprights in the other pair by a respective pair of lower crossbars, acting together as a base for the
30 hammock.

6. A hammock as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the releasable securing means include or comprise elastic webbing.

7. A hammock as claimed in Claim 6 in which the elastic webbing is permanently secured to the cradle.

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8. A hammock as claimed in Claim 6 in which the cradle is releasable from the webbing.

9. A hammock as claimed in any one of the preceding claims including a cover shaped to fit over the frame and capable, when so positioned, of retaining a cat or dog therein.

10. A hammock as claimed in Claim 9 in which the cover is of a size and shape to retain a cat or dog therein when in the cradle, the cradle having been released from the frame and placed on a floor of the cover.

11. A hammock as claimed in Claim 9 or Claim 10 in which the cover includes a carrying handle.

12. A hammock as claimed in any one of Claims 9 to 11 in which the cover has an opening at one end through which the frame may be passed into the cover, the opening having a closable flap.

13. A hammock as claimed in any one of Claims 9 to 12 in which the cover includes one or more zipped slits therein.

14. A hammock as claimed in any one of Claims 9 to 13 in which the cover includes one or more apertures therein allowing the owner of a cat or dog inside the

cover to manipulate toys inside the cover.

15. A hammock for cats or dogs substantially as
5 specifically described, with reference to the drawings.

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Amendments to the claims have been filed as follows

1. A hammock for cats or dogs comprising a support frame having two pairs of uprights, the uprights of each pair being joined at their upper ends in an inverted U or V-shaped arrangement, and the two pairs being joined by an upper cross bar suitable for use as a carrying handkle; a cradle suspended from the frame by releasable securing means, the securing means holding the cradle above ground level; and a cover shaped to fit over the frame and capable, when so positioned, of retaining a cat or dog therein.
2. A hammock as claimed in Claim 1 in which there are four releasable securing means arranged to secure the cradle to the frame at the four respective uprights, one pair of uprights being at one end of the cradle, the other pair at the other.
3. A hammock as claimed in Claims 1 or Claim 2 in which the lower ends of the uprights in one pair are joined to the respective lower ends of the uprights in the other pair by a respective pair of lower crossbars, acting together as a base for the hammock.
4. A hammock as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the releasable securing means include or comprise elastic webbing.
5. A hammock as claimed in Claim 4 in which the elastic webbing is permanently secured to the cradle.
6. A hammock as claimed in Claim 4 in which the

cradle is releasable from the webbing.

7. A hammock as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the cover is of a size and shape to retain a cat or dog therein when in the cradle, the cradle having been released from the frame and placed on a floor of the cover.

8. A hammock as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the cover includes a carrying handle.

9. A hammock as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the cover has an opening at one end through which the frame may be passed into the cover, the opening having a closable flap.

10. A hammock as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the cover includes one or more zipped slits therein.

11. A hammock as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the cover includes one or more apertures therein allowing the owner of a cat or dog inside the cover to manipulate toys inside the cover.

12. A hammock for cats or dogs substantially as specifically described, with reference to the drawings.